Interview Questions

You took Dr. Sibley’s course, ISP203A, Global Change, during the XX semester. I would like to ask you a few questions about some of the tasks you performed as homework and test questions. I’m particularly interested in the analogy questions. While these are academic questions, we are interested in better understanding what students’ the written responses actually mean, so you are not being “graded”. We hope, that by you talking about your answers, we’ll gain insight into how other students approach these sorts of questions. I wonder if you could tell me what you think the term analogy means?

Do you think you use analogies in classes other than ISP203A?

Do you think you use them in your everyday conversations and if so do you do it frequently, occasionally, rarely?

Would you be willing to again some of the exercise you did as homework or test questions?

What I would like to do is give you the question on a piece of paper and have you write your answer then we can talk a little bit about how you arrived at that answer. Okay?

In the first part of the course, on the water cycle, you worked on a question similar to this.

*Circulation in the atmosphere is similar to thermohaline circulation because……*

Please try to complete the sentence.

(Note: the student is likely to ask for a definition of thermohaline. First responses would be: What do you think thermo refers to? What do you think haline refers to? If necessary students would be told haline refers to salt).

You stated that atmospheric and thermohaline circulation are similar because…. (Repeating what the student wrote). Can you think of any other ways in which they are similar?

Is atmospheric circulation similar to anything else?

Why is atmospheric circulation similar to (whatever the student answered above)?

If students don’t mention circulation of water in a pan on a stove, the interviewer will state:

Now I would like you to think about a pan of water on hot stove. As the water heats up, it will begin to circulate. Do you think this circulation is more similar to theromhaline circulation or atmospheric circulation?

Can you explain your thinking?

Thanks. I wonder if we could work on another question that you worked on in the class?

Please complete this statement:

*Subduction is similar to…………..because………..*

(Students may need to be prompted or told that at a subduction zone one plate moves under another plate).

You wrote that subduction is similar to… be there anything else that you can think of that it might be similar to?

(Based on past experience we expect many students to state that subduction is similar to a car crash. For those answers we will continue with questions such as:)

What about subduction and a car crash seem most similar?

What seems most different?

I would like you to try one more. Okay?

*Degassing of carbon dioxide of the oceans is similar to……because……*

You wrote that degassing is similar to…… and you stated they are similar because…..

Are there any other reasons why they are similar?

Are there any important differences between the two?

Is there anything else that you can think of that it might be similar to degassing of carbon dioxide?

Some people write that degassing is similar to chemical precipitation of salt from salty water. Can you think of any way in which degassing and salt precipitation are similar?

Now that you’ve done three of these exercises, I would like to talk a little bit about what you think about when you are doing them. So when you first start the exercise, what comes to mind?

You did these sorts of exercises throughout the semester. If you were the teacher and wanted to explain to students why you assigned these exercises, what would you say?

Thanks for taking the time to help us. Are there any questions you would like to ask?